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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at teacher behavior in the classroom and teacher student relationships. The first section describes teacher behavior from an interpersonal perspective and presents a model to map behavior using two dimensions, proximity and influence. Proximity indicates degree of cooperation between those who are communicating; influence indicates who is controlling the communication. The second section identifies five channels of nonverbal teacher behavior: (1) use of the space; (2) body movement and position; (3) facial expression; (4) how long the teacher looks at the students; and (5) the non-content aspects of speech. The third section examines a questionnaire to determine interpersonal style, and describes the classroom environment created by teachers according to their interpersonal profile. Finally, the results of a study of student perception of interpersonal style and effective outcomes for physics teachers suggest that the relationship between students' perceptions of interpersonal styles of teachers and student achievement and attitudes are not identical. Repressive teachers had the highest student achievement scores, but were low in terms of student attitudes. Directive and authoritative teachers were high in both outcome categories. The teachers with disorderly classrooms had students with negative attitudes and low achievement scores. (ND)

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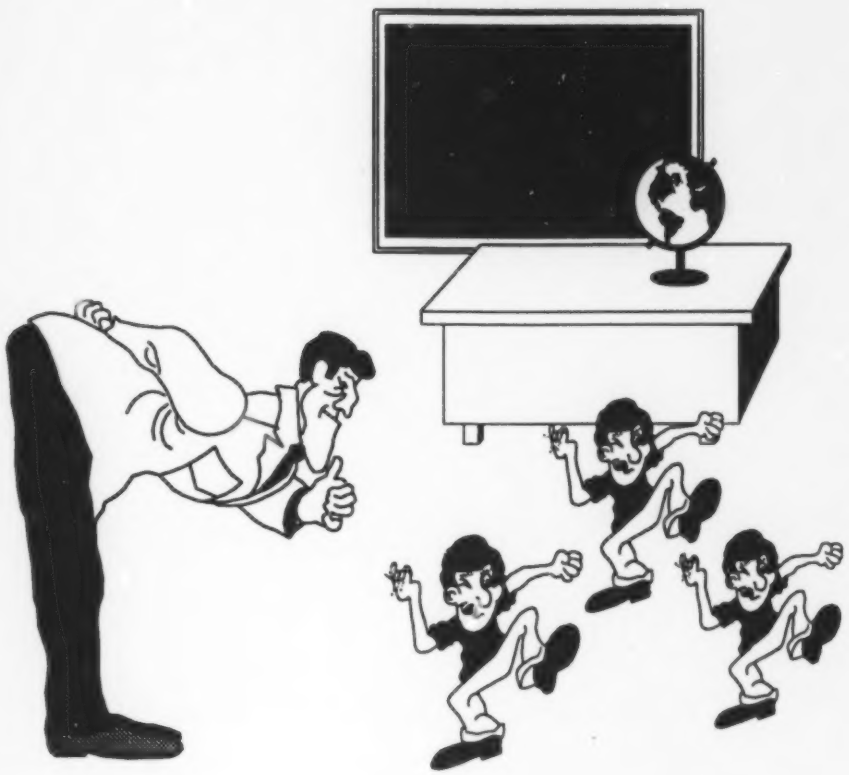
An Interpersonal Perspective on Teacher Behaviour in the Classroom



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AN INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHER BEHAVIOUR IN THE CLASSROOM
paper presented at ECER 1995, Bath

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AN INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHER BEHAVIOUR IN THE CLASSROOM

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three perspectives on teacher behaviour

We distinguish three perspectives on teacher behaviour:
The *content perspective* focuses on the meaning of the behaviour of the teacher (usually the language) as far as it concerns the topic taught. The *methods or pedagogical perspective* refers to the plethora of technical strategies such as choice and organization of teaching materials and instructional methods, motivational strategies and assessment. The *interpersonal perspective* refers to the way the students and the teacher perceive the relationship with the teacher. This has mainly to do with the actions the teacher uses to create and maintain a working climate in the classroom.
The three perspectives can be applied to study every instance of teacher behaviour. In some situations it will be more important to study the behaviour from one perspective than from another.

the systems approach to study teacher behaviour from an interpersonal perspective

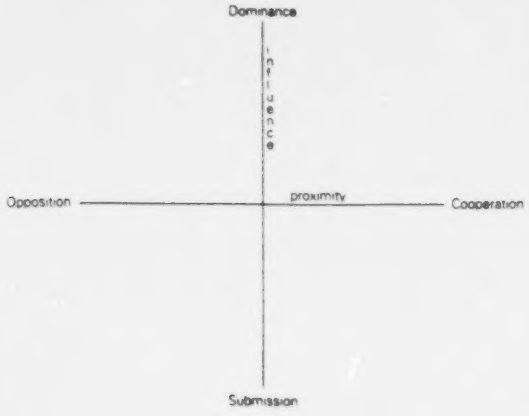
We consider every behaviour that someone displays in the presence of someone else as communication. This so-called systems approach assumes therefore that in the presence of some one else one cannot *not* communicate. Our rationale for choosing this perspective is that whatever someone's intentions are the other in the communication will infer meaning from someone's behaviour. If for example teachers ignore students' questions because they do not hear these then students may get this inattention from the teacher's behaviour but equally well they may infer that the teacher is too busy, thinks that the students are too dull to understand or that the questions are impertinent. The message that students take from the teacher's negation can be different from the teacher's intention, because there is no ultimately shared, agreed upon system to attach meaning.

two levels of extensiveness

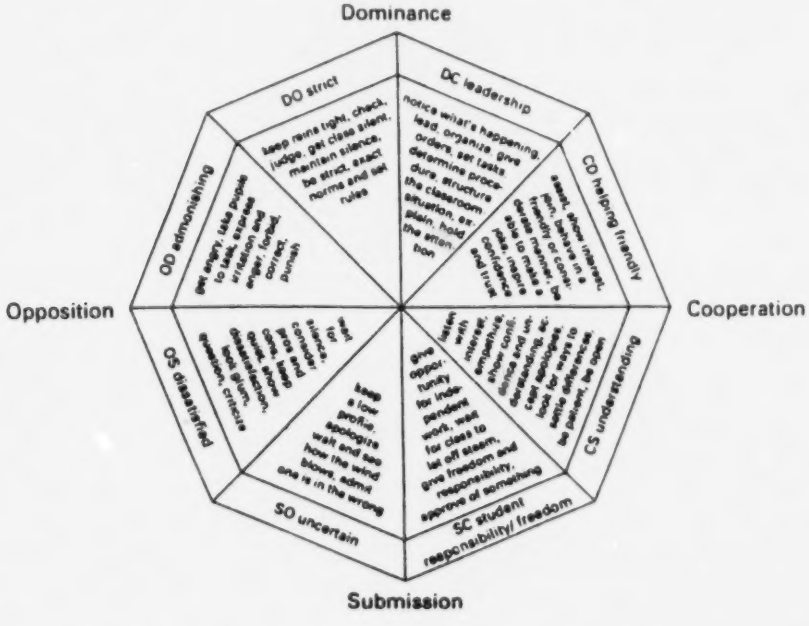
In the systems approach two levels of extensiveness of interactions are distinguished. Short term interactions are the exchanges of messages of a few seconds each that consist of one question, one assignment, one response, one gesture etc. In interactions redundancy and repeating patterns can evolve over time. Then interactions on the second level, relatively stable interaction patterns (interpersonal style), are seen.

a model for the interpersonal perspective on teacher behaviour

Leary and his co-workers used two dimensions to map behaviour from an interpersonal perspective. We have labelled the two dimensions Proximity (Cooperation-Opposition) and Influence (Dominance-Submission). The Proximity dimension designates the degree of cooperation or closeness between those who are communicating. The Influence dimension indicates who is directing or controlling the communication, and how often.



The two dimensional chart can be refined by drawing two extra lines as in the figure below. This figure provides examples of eight different types of interpersonal behaviours displayed by teachers. The eight equal sectors are labelled DC, CD, etc. according to their position in the coordinate system (much like the directions on a compass). For example, the two sectors DC and CD are both characterized by Dominance and Cooperation. In the DC sector, however the Dominance aspect prevails over the Cooperation aspect. Thus, a teacher displaying DC behaviour might be explaining something to the class, organizing groups, making assignments, and the like. The adjacent CD sector includes behaviours of a more cooperative and less dominant character, and the teacher might be seen assisting students, or acting friendly or considerate. The sections of the model describe eight different behaviour aspects: Leadership (DC), Helpful/Friendly (CD), Understanding (CS), Student Responsibility/Freedom (SC), Uncertain (SO), Dissatisfied (OS), Admonishing (OD) and Strict (DO).



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An interpersonal perspective on nonverbal teacher behaviour

Spoken and written language are well equipped for the communication of content, but the communication of relationship messages is particularly the domain of nonverbal behaviour. Even though the school is very much a verbally oriented institution in which one of the main activities is the verbal transfer of information, it is important to study nonverbal teacher behaviour to be able to better understand classroom communication processes. With our research, we wanted to identify the characteristics of the nonverbal aspect of teacher behaviour most important for the interpersonal significance of this behaviour in everyday classrooms.

five channels of nonverbal behaviour

We classify nonverbal behaviour into five *channels*. These channels are:

1 Space (the teacher's use of the space in the classroom);
2 Body (position and movement of the trunk, the arms and the head);
3 Face (various expressions);
4 Visual Behaviour (duration of the teacher looking at the students);
5 Voice (the non-content aspects of speech).

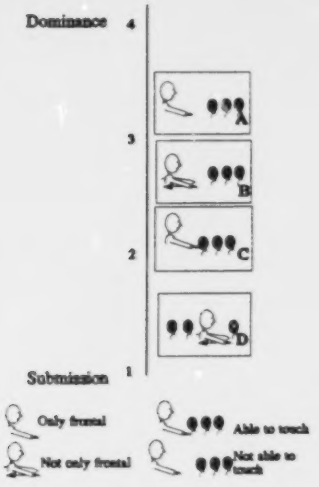
an interpersonal perspective on each of the five channels

To investigate the nonverbal teacher behaviour from an interpersonal perspective we focused on the character of the relation between nonverbal teacher behaviour and the interpersonal significance of teacher behaviour in terms of the dimensions of the Model for Interpersonal Teacher Behaviour: the Dominance-Submission dimension (DS) and the Cooperation-Opposition dimension (CO).

We showed raters about thousand 8-second videofragments, selected from the videotaped lessons of 53 teachers at work in their classrooms. The raters were asked to score the teacher behaviour in these fragments on rating scales corresponding to the DS and CO dimensions. Subsequently the nonverbal behaviour in the fragments was scored with a specially designed observation instrument for nonverbal teacher behaviour.

All channels were important for explaining variance in the DS ratings, whereas for explaining variance in the CO ratings only the Face and Voice channel were important.

In the graphs printed on the next pages we have depicted the most important categories of behaviour from the five channels of nonverbal teacher behaviour for the mean ratings on the DS and CO scales for the fragments in which they were scored. In these figures, nonverbal behaviours are plotted on a vertical y-axes according to the mean DS rating. The mean CO ratings of nonverbal behaviours from the channels Face and Voice are plotted on the horizontal x-axes.

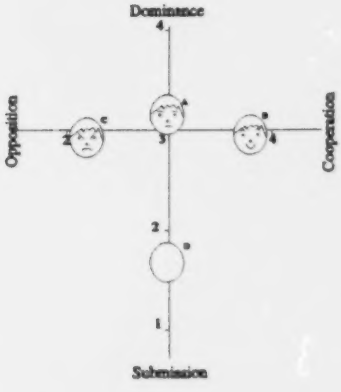


Space

A body-orientation that is *frontal* to the majority of the students during the entire fragment turned out to be strongly related to a perception of teacher behaviour as dominant. The other major aspect of spatial behaviour for the rating of teacher behaviour on the DS-scale was the distance to the nearest student. Being *able to touch* one or more students was related to a perception of teacher behaviour as relatively submissive.

Body

Differences in head position and movement proved to be the major aspects of body movement and position for the rating of teacher behaviour on the DS rating scale.
We found that fragments in which the teacher has an upright head position and moves his or her head around, for instance when scanning the class, were rated as relatively dominant. This behaviour is depicted in drawing A. A head position that indicates the teacher is not looking at the students, as in drawing D, was scored often in fragments showing teacher behaviour that was rated as relatively submissive.



Face

For the DS ratings, the visibility of the face for the students was the most important factor. Not surprising if compared with the importance of an upright head position for a rating as relatively dominant.
The most important facial expression for the CO ratings were laughing, neutral or angry facial expressions.

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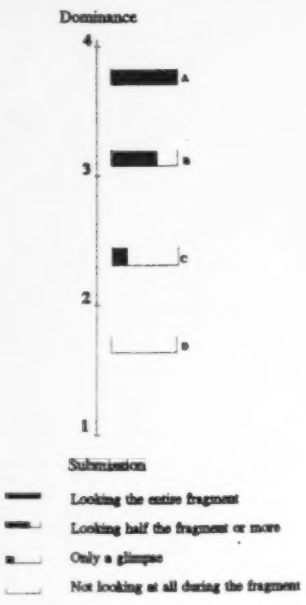
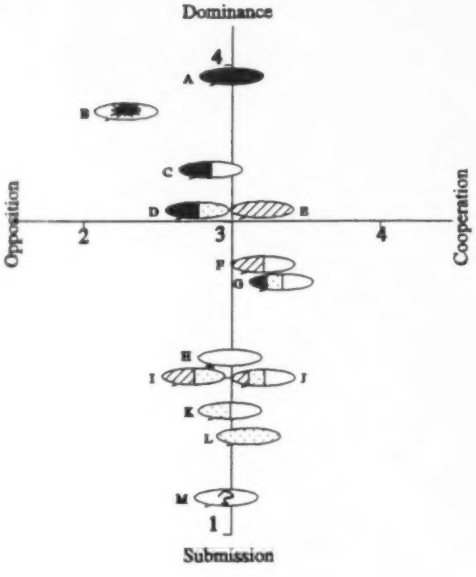


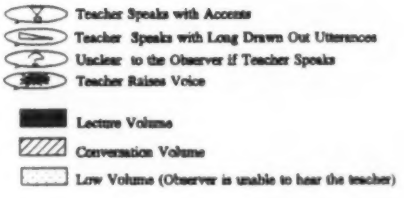
Visual Behaviour

The graph shows that the more the teacher looks at the students, the more he or she is perceived as dominant.



Voice

The relation between the Voice channel and the DS ratings seems to be that the longer the teacher speaks using a lecturing volume, the more he or she is perceived as dominant *and* the longer the teacher speaks in such a way that he or she cannot be heard by the observer, the more the teacher's behaviour is perceived as submissive.
For the CO ratings, whether the teacher raises his or her Voice (drawing B versus the other drawings) is the most important distinctive feature.


Teacher Speaks with Accents
Teacher Speaks with Long Drawn Out Utterances
Unclear to the Observer if Teacher Speaks
Teacher Raises Voice
Lecture Volume
Conversation Volume
Low Volume (Observer is unable to hear the teacher)

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In a study on discipline problems and classroom management, it was found that management success of teachers, in terms of for instance freedom from deviancy, correlates with withitness (the teacher demonstrates that he or she knows what is going on) and overlapping (the teacher is able to attend to two issues simultaneously). The major relation between the categories of the channels Space, Body, Face and Visual Behaviour, can be interpreted with these concepts: the more the teacher shows behaviours facilitating visual contact with the class, the more his or her behaviour is perceived as dominant. When visual contact is combined with emphatic verbal presence a combination of nonverbal behaviours emerges, that the raters in our study perceived as the most dominant one.

As in many studies on the perception of nonverbal behaviour, we found the facial expression is the most important channel of nonverbal behaviour for the perception of cooperation-opposition relationship messages. Another aspect of nonverbal behaviour which we found to be important for explaining variance in the CO ratings is whether or not the teacher raises his or her voice.

the questionnaire

Dutch version: 77 items, 8 scales
American version 64 items, 8 scales

Item example:

	never				always
S/He is friendly	1	2	3	4	5

Number of items and typical item for each of the eight scales

		number of items Dutch	American	typical item
DC	Leadership	10	7	S/He is a good leader
CD	Helpful/ Friendly	10	8	S/He is someone we can depend on
CS	Understanding	10	8	If we have something to say s/he will listen
SC	Student responsibility/ Freedom	9	8	S/he gives us a lot of free time in class
SO	Uncertain	9	7	S/He seems uncertain
OS	Dissatisfied	11	9	S/He is suspicious
OD	Admonishing	9	8	S/He gets angry
DO	Strict	9	9	S/He is strict

Research showed that the homogeneity of each of the eight groups of items is considerable. The internal consistencies (Cronbach's α) are generally above .80. The agreement between the scores of students in a single class met the general requirements for agreement between observer scores. From a generalizability study it was concluded that the questionnaire should be administered to at least ten students in a class for the data to be reliable. The questionnaire does not need to be administered more than once per year, since interpersonal style remains relatively stable. A minimum of two classes should complete the questionnaire for each teacher to achieve a reliable measure of overall style. Analyses determined that the two-factor structure did indeed support the eight scales for both the Dutch and the American version of the questionnaire.

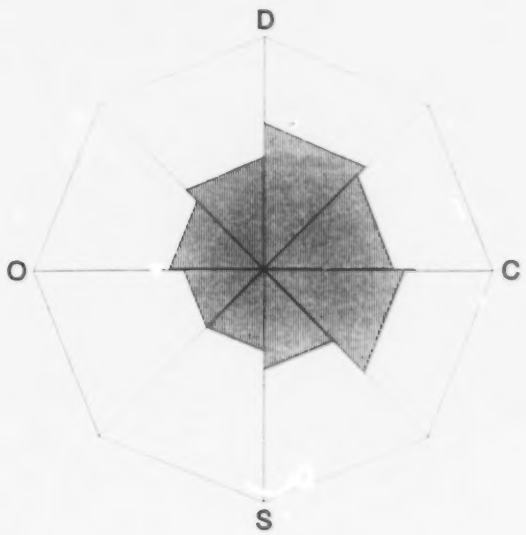
perceptions of students and teachers

When describing the interpersonal style of teachers we make a distinction between perceptions of students of their teachers and perceptions of teachers themselves. Data on the perceptions of students are obtained when the questionnaire is administered to students. Scale scores of students are combined to a class mean. When the questionnaire is administered to teachers, we make a distinction between the self perception of teachers (when they are asked to describe their actual behaviour and ideal perceptions of teachers (when they are asked to describe the behaviour they would like to display).

Interpersonal profiles

Each completed questionnaire yields a set of eight scale scores. These can be represented in the model of interpersonal behaviour. The graphic representation of the results of the questionnaire (interpersonal profile) is achieved by shading in each sector of the model for the interpersonal perspective on teacher behaviour[1].

an example



most frequent perception of Dutch students of their teacher

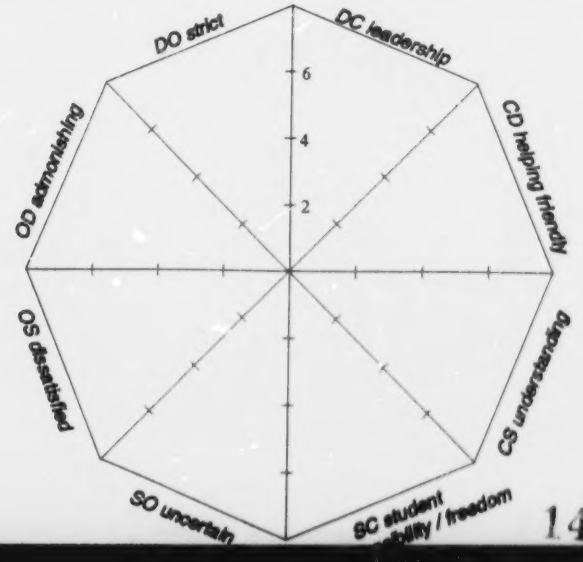
[1]The ratio of the length of the perpendicular bisector of the shaded part and the length of the perpendicular bisector of the total sector equals the ratio of the observed score and the maximum score for that sector.

short version of the questionnaire

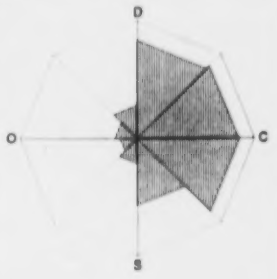
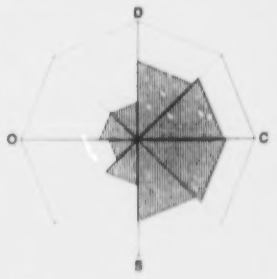
		never				always
		0	1	2	3	4
1.	This teacher gives us a lot of free time in class	0	1	2	3	4
2.	This teacher realizes when we don't understand	0	1	2	3	4
3.	This teacher is friendly	0	1	2	3	4
4.	This teacher seems dissatisfied	0	1	2	3	4
5.	This teachers' standards are very high	0	1	2	3	4
6.	This teacher is willing to explain things again	0	1	2	3	4
7.	This teacher has a bad temper	0	1	2	3	4
8.	We can influence this teacher	0	1	2	3	4
9.	This teacher gets angry unexpectedly	0	1	2	3	4
10.	This teacher is strict	0	1	2	3	4
11.	This teacher is a good leader	0	1	2	3	4
12.	This teacher acts as if (s)he does not know what to do	0	1	2	3	4
13.	We learn a lot from this teacher	0	1	2	3	4
14.	This teacher gets angry quickly	0	1	2	3	4
15.	This teachers' class is pleasant	0	1	2	3	4
16.	This teacher is hesitant	0	1	2	3	4

short version of the questionnaire

DC CD CS SC SO OS OD DO



Interpersonal Profiles of the eight Types of the Typology of Interpersonal Styles

type of interpersonal profile	classroom environment
1, directive	The learning environment in a class with a teacher with a directive profile is well-structured and task-oriented. The Directive teacher is organized efficiently and normally completes all lessons on time. S/he dominates class discussion, but generally holds students' interest. The teacher usually isn't really close to the students, though s/he is occasionally friendly and understanding. S/he has high standards and is seen as demanding. While things seem businesslike, the teacher continually has to work at it. S/he gets angry at times and has to remind the class that they are there to work. S/he likes to call on students who misbehave and are inattentive. This normally straightens them up quickly.
2, authorative	The Authoritative atmosphere is well-structured, pleasant and task-oriented. Rules and procedures are clear and students don't need to be reminded. They are attentive, and generally produce better work than their peers in the Directive teacher's classes. The Authoritative teacher is enthusiastic and open to students' needs. S/he takes a personal interest in them, and this comes through in the lessons. While his/her favorite method is the lecture, the authoritative teacher frequently uses other techniques. The lessons are well planned and logically structured.
 3, tolerant and authoritative	Tolerant and Authoritative teachers maintain a structure which supports student responsibility and freedom. They use a variety of methods, to which students respond well. They frequently organize their lessons around small group work. While the class environment resembles Type 2, the Tolerant/Authoritative teacher develops closer relationships with students. They enjoy the class and are highly involved in most lessons. Both students and teacher can occasionally be seen laughing, and there is very little need to enforce the rules. The teacher ignores minor disruptions, choosing instead to concentrate on the lesson. Students work to reach their own and the teacher's instructional goals with little or no complaints.
 4, tolerant	There seem to be separate Dutch and American views of the Tolerant teacher. To the Dutch, the atmosphere is pleasant and supportive and students enjoy attending class. They have more freedom in Type 4 classes than in those above, and have some real power to influence curriculum and instruction. Students appreciate the teacher's personal involvement and his/her ability to match the subject matter with their learning styles. They often work at their own pace and the class atmosphere sometimes may be a little confused as a result. In the U.S., however, the Tolerant teacher is seen to be disorganized. His/her lessons are not prepared well and they don't challenge students. The teacher often begins the lesson with an explanation and then sends the students off to individually complete an assignment. While the teacher is interested in students' personal lives, his/her academic expectations for them aren't evident.

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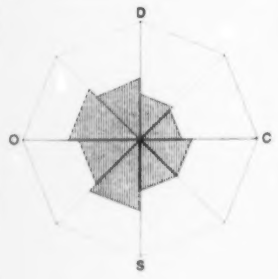
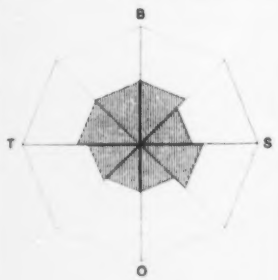
 5. uncertain/tolerant	Uncertain/Tolerant teachers are highly cooperative but don't show much leadership in class. Their lessons are poorly structured, are not introduced completely and don't have much follow-through. They generally tolerate disorder, and students are not task-oriented. The Uncertain/Tolerant teacher is quite concerned about the class, and is willing to explain things repeatedly to students who haven't been listening. The atmosphere is so unstructured, however, that only the students in front are attentive while the others play games, do homework, and the like. They are not provocative, however, and the teacher manages to ignore them while loudly and quickly covering the subject. The Uncertain/Tolerant teacher's rules of behaviour are arbitrary, and students don't know what to expect when infractions occur. The teacher's few efforts to stop the misbehaviour are delivered without emphasis and have little effect on the class. Sometimes the teacher reacts quickly, and at other times completely ignores inattentiveness. Class performance expectations are minimal and mostly immediate rather than long-range. The overall effect is of an unproductive equilibrium in which teacher and students seem to go their own way.
 6. uncertain/aggressive	These classes are characterized by an aggressive kind of disorder. Teacher and students regard each other as opponents and spend almost all their time in symmetrically escalating conflicts. Students seize nearly every opportunity to be disruptive, and continually provoke the teacher by jumping up, laughing and shouting out. This generally brings a panicked over-reaction from the teacher which is met by even greater student misbehaviour. An observer in this class might see the teacher and student fighting over a book which the student has been reading. The teacher grabs the book in an effort to force the student to pay attention. The student resists because s/he thinks the teacher has no right to his/her property. Since neither one backs down, the situation often escalates out of control. In the middle of the confusion the Uncertain/Aggressive teacher may suddenly try to discipline a few students, but often manages to miss the real culprits. Because of the teacher's unpredictable and unbalanced behaviour, the students feel that s/he is to blame. Rules of behaviour aren't communicated or explained properly. The teacher spends most of his/her time trying to manage the class, yet seems unwilling to experiment with different instructional techniques. S/he prefers to think 'first, they'll have to behave'. Learning is the least important aspect of the class, unfortunately.
 7. repressive	Students in the Repressive teacher's class are uninvolved and extremely docile. They follow the rules and are afraid of the teacher's angry outbursts. S/he seems to overreact to small transgressions, frequently making sarcastic remarks or giving failing grades. The Repressive teacher is the epitome of complementary rigidity. The Repressive teacher's lessons are structured but not well-organized. While directions and background information are provided, few questions are allowed or encouraged. Occasionally, students will work on individual assignments, for which they receive precious little help from the teacher. The atmosphere is guarded and unpleasant, and the students are apprehensive and fearful. Since the Repressive teacher's expectations are competition-oriented and inflated, students worry alot about their exams. The teacher seems to repress student initiative, preferring to lecture while the students sit still. They perceive the teacher as unhappy and inpatient and their silence seems like the calm before the storm.
 8. drudging	The atmosphere in a Drudging teacher's class varies between Type 5 and 6 disorder. One thing is constant, however: the teacher continually struggles to manage the class. S/he usually succeeds (unlike Types 5 and 6), but not before expending a great deal of energy. Students pay attention as long as the teacher actively tries to motivate them. When they do get involved, the atmosphere is oriented toward the subject matter and the teacher doesn't generate much warmth. S/he generally follows a routine in which s/he does most of the talking and avoids experimenting with new methods. The Drudging teacher always seems to be going downhill and the class is neither enthusiastic nor supportive nor competitive. Unfortunately, because of the continual concern with class management the teacher sometimes looks as though s/he's on the verge of burnout.

some results of research:
students' perceptions of interpersonal style (of Physics teachers)
and cognitive and affective outcomes

The relationship between students' perceptions of interpersonal style and cognitive and affective outcomes was investigated for physics teachers.
In the Table estimation for the effects of the eight different types of students' perceptions of interpersonal styles on achievement and attitude scores are presented (after correction for the influences of other variables)

Effects on achievement and attitudes of students with different perceptions of the interpersonal style of their physics teachers

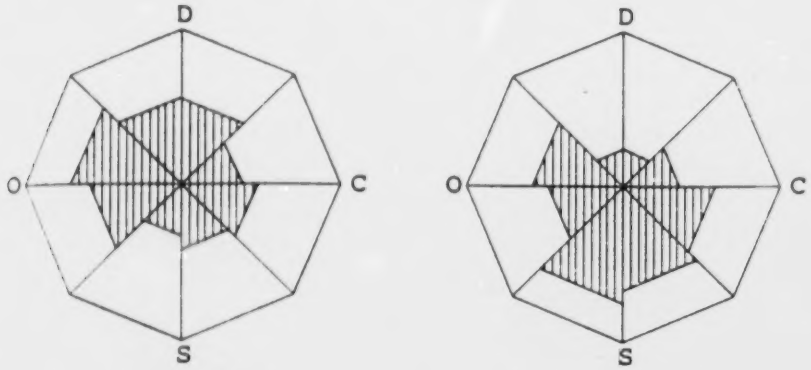
Interpersonal style		effect on achievement[a]	effect on attitude[b]
1	Directive	0.17	0.62
2	Authoritative	0.07	0.79
3	Authoritative/Tolerant	missing[c]	missing[c]
4	Tolerant	0.23	0.53
5	Uncertain/Tolerant	-0.17	0.51
6	Uncertain/Aggressive	-0.15	0.20
7	Repressive	0.40	0.38
8	Drudging	0	0

a) Achievement was measured with a standardized and internationally developed physics test.
b) Attitudes were measured by a questionnaire on students' experience with and motivation toward physics.
c) Too few cases to include in the analyses

The results of Table 1 show that on average the teacher with a Repressive style has the highest achievement outcomes. Teachers with disorderly classrooms (Types 5, 6, 8) reflect relatively low student achievement, whereas Directive, Authoritative and Tolerant teachers have relatively high outcomes.

The relation between student achievement and interpersonal style is due more to teacher behaviour described with the Influence dimension than with the Proximity dimension. The more a teacher is perceived as dominant, the more his/her students achieve. Strict (DO), Leadership (DC) and Helpful/Friendly (CD) behaviours are positively related to student achievement, whereas Student Responsibility and Freedom (SC), Uncertain (SO) and Dissatisfied (OS) behaviours are negatively related.

The Figure presents students' perceptions of the interpersonal style of two teachers with relatively high and low student achievement.

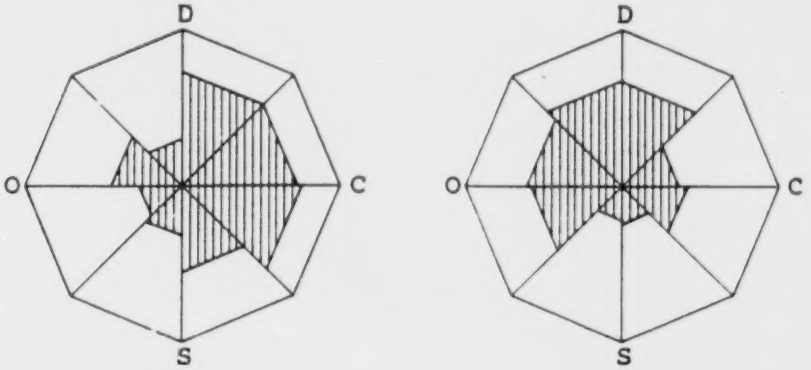


high student achievement

low student achievement

The table also includes measures of the attitude scores after correction. The Authoritative and Directive teachers have the highest student attitude scores. Students of the Drudging, Uncertain/Aggressive and Repressive teachers have the worst attitudes. The relationship between student attitudes and teacher interpersonal behaviour is connected much more intensely to the proximity dimension than to the influence dimension.
The Cooperation scales of the model for interpersonal teacher behaviour (Leadership, Helpful/Friendly, Understanding and Student Responsibility/Freedom - DC, CD, CS and SC) are positively related to student attitudes. The more teachers behaved in these ways the more their students viewed the physics lessons positively. The Opposition scales (Strict, Admonishing, Dissatisfied and Uncertain - DO, OD, OS and SO) are all negatively related to student attitudes. This means that students with teachers whose tendency is to show above-average behaviour on the right side of the D-S axis and below-average on the left side viewed their physics lessons more positively. The D-S axis therefore separates teacher behaviour which is associated with positive and negative student attitudes.

The Figure presents students' perceptions of the interpersonal styles of teachers with relatively high and low student attitudes.



high student attitudes

low student attitudes

The results for the relationship between students' perceptions of interpersonal styles of teachers and student achievement and attitudes are not identical. The Repressive teacher has the highest student achievement scores, but is low in terms of student attitudes. Directive and Authoritative teachers are rather high in both outcome categories. The teachers with disorderly classrooms have students with negative attitudes and low achievement scores.

If teachers want students to be high-achieving and supportive they may find themselves in a quandary. This is due to the conflicting demands of the Strict (DO) and Student Responsibility/Freedom (SC) categories. To realize higher student achievement teachers have to be rather strict, while positive student attitudes require greater flexibility. The other six sectors of the model do not present such conflicting demands.

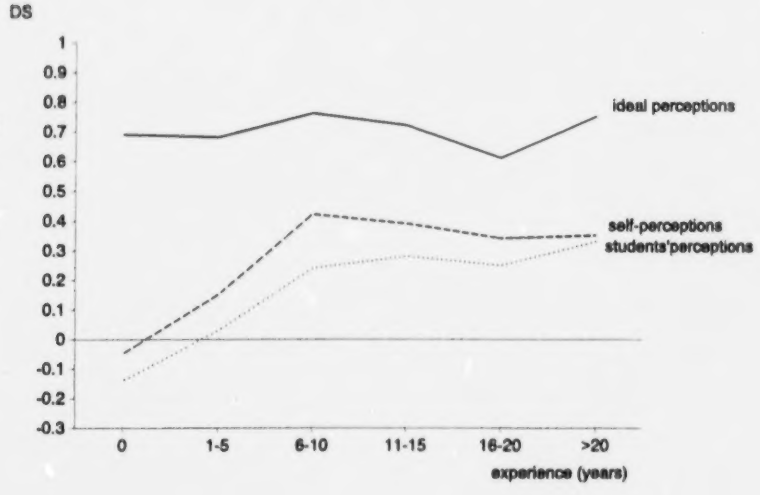
some results of research:
students' perceptions of Dutch teachers with different amount of experience

To investigate differences between students' perceptions of teachers with different amount of experience, we divided the teachers into the following six groups:

a. student teachers
b. teachers with one - five years of experience
c. six - ten years
d. eleven - fifteen years
e. sixteen - twenty years and
f. more than twenty years.

We compared the mean perceptions of students and teachers (self-perceptions and ideal perceptions) of these six groups of teachers by means of dimension-scores (Influence (DS-)scores and Proximity (CO-)scores).
The Figure plots the means of the Influence (DS) scores for students' and teachers' ideal and self-perceptions of the six groups of teachers.

Mean Influence (DS) Scores by Experience Level



Teachers in different stages of their careers do not vary much in their perceptions of ideal dominant behaviour. Throughout their careers teachers apparently agree on the amount of dominant behaviour desired in the classroom.

Students' and teachers' perceptions of actual behaviour, however, noticeably vary for teachers across experience levels. An increase in dominant behaviour can be seen from the student-teacher period through six - ten years. After this point there is a relative constancy. We arrived at the same results for the teachers' self-perceptions.

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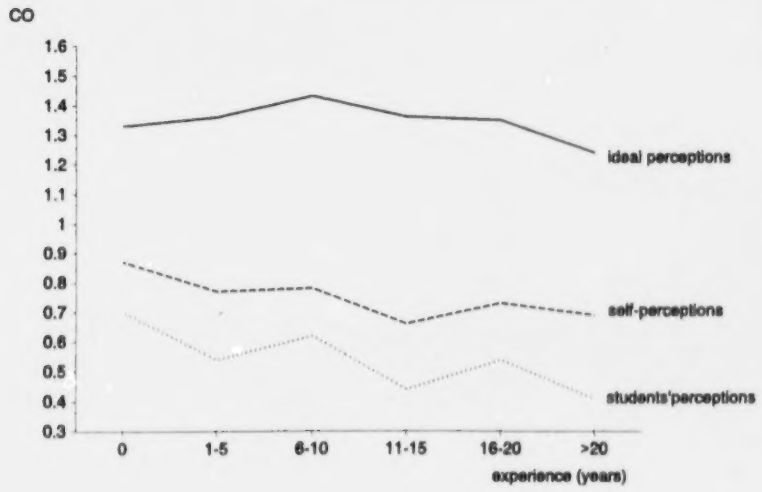
In the Figure below the means of the Proximity (CO) scores for students' and teachers' ideal and self-perceptions are presented for each of the six groups of teachers.

Mean Proximity (CO) Scores by Experience Level



The Figure shows that once again, teachers' perceptions of the ideal interpersonal style (in this case the proximity dimension) does not change very much throughout their careers. Regardless of experience level, teachers basically agree on the amount of cooperative behaviour they desire in the classroom.

Like the Influence domain, the mean Proximity-scores for the students' and teachers' perceptions differ across groups. The differences, however, are much smaller than on the influence dimension. The results indicate a moderate decline in Proximity-scores throughout the career.

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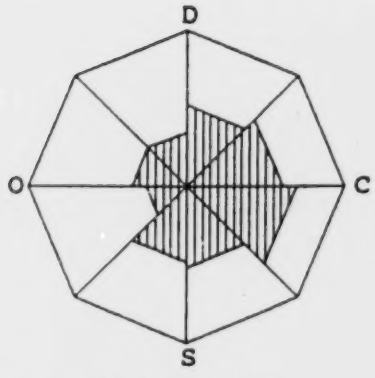
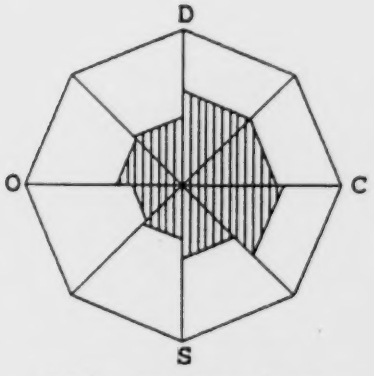
In the Figure below average Interpersonal Profiles (students' perceptions) are presented for different experience levels

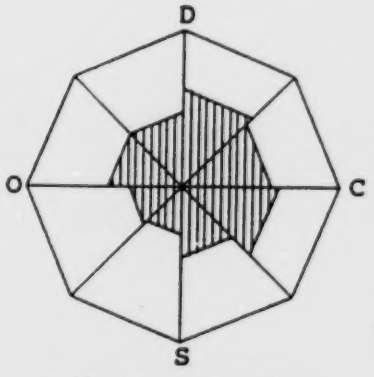
During the first years of the teaching career the amount of Uncertain (SO) behaviour (and consequently the amount of disorder) decreases and the amount of Leadership (DC) and Strict (DO) behaviour increases. Differences between the six - ten and twenty-plus groups are smaller than at the start of the career. They actually describe an increase in opposite behaviour, as can be seen by the higher OS (Dissatisfied), and OD (Admonishing) and lower CD (Helping/Friendly) and CS (Understanding) scores.



Student-teachers
Tolerant



6-10 years of experience
Directive



> 20 years of experience
Directive

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